

Week of January 6, 2003: MaineDOT Flash Facts

Topic: Driving too fast for conditions

Opener and Facts:

- Illegal or Unsafe Speed is a factor in 15% of all Maine crashes, but a factor in nearly 40% of fatal crashes.
 - 20% of the excessive speed related fatal crashes occur between midnight and 3am. Don't let that feeling that you have the road to yourself lead to reckless behavior.
 - Excessive speed leads to the following problems:
 - ✓ Reduced time to react to hazards on the road
 - ✓ Increased braking distance
 - ✓ Reduced ability to control vehicle/or to correct maneuvering
- Any of these can mean the difference between being safe or in a crash with severe impact.

-More than 40% of winter storm crashes and almost 60% of the resulting fatalities are due to illegal or unsafe speed.

-182 fatal crashes resulted from driving too fast for conditions between 1999 and 2001. About two thirds of these crashes were Run Off the Road and almost another 20% were Head On crashes.

- Illegal or unsafe speed is a particular concern for young drivers:
 - 38% of 16 to 22 year old drivers involved in Maine crashes were reported as driving too fast.
 - Of the 182 fatal crashes involving speed, 42% involved drivers aged 16 to 22.
 - From 1999 to 2001, over 4,000 teenagers involved in Maine crashes were noted as traveling at illegal or unsafe speed.

-Do a quick mental test when you are driving and ask yourself "If something I don't expect happens ahead, will I be able to stop in time to avoid hitting...(another vehicle, a pedestrian, a moose?) Will I go off the road or into oncoming traffic?"

Run Off Road crashes result in the most fatalities of all crash types in Maine. Two thirds of these crashes involve excessive or illegal speed.

Closer: (for every Flash Facts segment this week)

Remember, as Flash the MaineDOT Road Model says..."We all need to slow down!"

Monday:

Tips:

- The posted speed limit is one important factor for determining safe speed, but there are other considerations. Some situations where slower speed may be necessary are:
 - Weather (this time of year brings the toughest challenges: ice and snow-and not just during a storm. As temperatures fluctuate, ice and snow melt refreeze, especially at night, so road surfaces that were okay earlier can become slick. Watch for black ice.)
 - Road features, such as curves and hills (especially at crests)
 - Visibility- Bright sun; nighttime conditions; and heavy, blowing snow are all problems.

Adjust your speed so you can:

- Read the road ahead.
- React to changing conditions (such as curves, pedestrians, entering traffic, animals, etc.).
- Brake or maneuver for unexpected changes while maintaining vehicle control.
- Adapt to unfamiliar roads.

Driver mental checklist when thinking about proper speed:

- What's the condition of the road surface?
- Can I react to unexpected objects in the road?
- What's the condition of my vehicle? (tires, wipers, etc)
- What's the weather and visibility?
- Are roads that were wet earlier now frozen?
- Do roads look shiny or wet? (indicating that they might be slippery)
- If the weather's bad:
Have you - **decreased** speed?
- **increased** the distance between you and the vehicle ahead? (at least 4 seconds)
- What kind of condition am I, the driver, in? (Tired, sleepy, angry?)

Wednesday:

Tips:

Keep your vehicle at a speed where you can control it and safely use your brakes. Factors to consider in adjusting your speed:

- Weather conditions (snow, sleet, freezing rain, rain, fog)
 - Affect visibility and traction.
 - Hydroplaning, especially on rutted roads
 - Braking and turning are both affected when roads are wet
 - White-outs significantly limit visibility
- Road conditions (Snow, ice or slush)
- Sight Distance -- Maintain a speed at which you can stop within the distance you can see ahead. Pull completely off the road if conditions are severe.
- Vehicle Conditions
 - Tires must have good tread
 - Brakes must be in good working order
 - Four-wheel drive does not help in braking and gives a false sense of security
- Driver Conditions
 - Am I sleepy or tired?
 - Am I upset or angry?
 - Is there anything else going on with me that will effect how I drive?

Friday:

Tips:

In addition to weather and road conditions, here are some other situations where speed should be reduced:

- When following a snow plow traveling in the same direction; or approaching one coming in the opposite direction.

*Prepared by:
Safety Management
Systems Management Division
Bureau of Planning
Maine Department of Transportation*

- Residential and commercial areas. (Where traffic will be exiting and turning into driveways and intersections. This time of year can be especially difficult because of snow banks blocking your ability to see traffic. You may also need to quickly react to plows and people shoveling out their driveways.)
- Nighttime (When wildlife is especially difficult to see. Moose and deer collisions are common everywhere in the state.)

Drive defensively and watch out for problems with “the other vehicle”. Avoid having their mistake become your problem.

Make sure you travel at speeds that allow adequate reaction time and safe braking and turning in the event you need to avoid a collision.